

USDA Releases 2004 Report on Backyard and Small Production Poultry Flocks

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) has released a descriptive report entitled *Part I: Reference of Health and Management of Backyard/Small Production Flocks in the United States, 2004*. The report was compiled from data collected during the NAHMS Poultry 2004 study and takes an in-depth look at management and biosecurity practices of backyard flocks in 18 major poultry-producing states. Copies of the report have been distributed to poultry industry members across the country.

Poultry 2004 is NAHMS' second study of the U.S. poultry industry. Layers 1999 was the first national study on poultry baseline health and management. Layers 1999 estimated the prevalence and associated risk factors of *Salmonella enterica* subsp. *enteritidis* in U.S. layer flocks.

For Poultry 2004, NAHMS conducted a thorough assessment to determine the information needs of the poultry industry, researchers and federal and state governments. This assessment indicated a need for more information regarding bird health, bird movement and biosecurity practices of nontraditional poultry industries, such as backyard flocks, gamefowl and live-bird markets. Here are a few highlights from the newly released descriptive report:

- On average, there were 29.4 residences located within a 1-mile radius of selected commercial poultry operations. Of these residences, 1.9 had birds other than pet birds (backyard flocks).
- On average, backyard flocks had 35.1 birds, ranging from an average of 26.1 birds in the Southeast region to 49.2 birds in the East region. However, nearly one in three backyard flocks (31.8 percent) had fewer than 10 birds.
- Use of veterinary medical services was rare in backyard flocks (2.9 percent of backyard flocks).
- Vaccinations were given to only 2.8 percent of backyard flocks.

- External parasites were the most common health problem reported (5.5 percent of backyard flocks).
- In general, reported health problems increased as flock size increased. Just over one-fifth of large backyard flocks (21.4 percent) reported respiratory problems.
- Just over half of all backyard flocks (55.2 percent) had at least one bird death (other than birds slaughtered for human consumption) during the 12 months prior to the study interview.
- Bird death loss during the previous year was 10.8 percent.
- Burial on the premises was the most common method of disposing of dead birds.
- The most common reason for having birds was for "fun or hobby," which ranked "very high" for 40.6 percent of backyard flocks owners. About one in four producers ranked family tradition, food and lifestyle as "very high" reasons for having birds.

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